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Castro, Fidel

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## The Castro Caper

There are some allegations the mind seeks to reject until it is confronted with facts that cannot be ignored. That is the case with the story that a United States Government agency hired a mobster to murder the chief of state of a nation with which the United States was at peace.

Robert A. Maheu's account of his role as recruiter for the plot—a statement which apparently parallels his sworn testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence—now makes the story impossible to dismiss. Mr. Maheu says he participated in the plot because "I felt we were in a just war." And he says that his recruit, John Roselli, was persuaded to join in the plan to poison Fidel Castro because "this was in behalf of this government."

But Congress had declared no war on Cuba and the segment of "this government" which was authorizing the plot would have been hard pressed to demonstrate any valid mandate from the people of the United States to murder somebody. Fortunately, so far as Maheu knew, the signal to pass the poison never came.

Although secret services of other nations doubtless engage in such activities, it was never contemplated by the American people or the Congress to authorize the Central Intelligence Agency to conspire with the Mafia to commit murder. Though the need for an effective intelligence service is manifest, it is equally important that a civilized people impose rational limits on their government agents. As the Castro plot demonstrates, that has hardly been the case. Congress has the unquestionable responsibility to contain the agency—as we first noted on this page some twenty years ago.

The development of effective means for Congress to conduct and sustain its oversight responsibilities is the most important task before the two special Intelligence Committees. There can be few services of greater value to the American people than that of insuring the responsible use of power and guarding against a repetition of such adventures as the C.I.A.'s romp with the Mafia.